The Master Key

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By JOHN FLEMING WILSON

The Escape of Ruth. TER his experience in res hands of the outraged priests of Bhala, Sir Donald Faver-

sham prepared to start the new day. He could not well realize just what had happened in the twenty-four hours, ed fluth. that had just ended. It needed the commonplace details of a morning's tollet to make things seem actual.

changed his whole future!

Ruth had promised to marry him! virtues of careful training with an changed by Ruth and Sir Donald. adaptability to circumstance which of the world.

a clock. In others he could amaze the the people against you and"most impulsive and impressionable ad-

When he first mot Ruth he had had With a meaning look toward Ruth. not the faintest notion of wooling ber. Sir Donald faced Dorr. "This is not a His admiration had been frank and pisce for Miss Gallon," he said formalunreserved, but without any underlying depth of feeling.

His volunteering to join John Dorr and Ruth in this wild search for the missing idol had been what he called a lark.

It was only long association with her. the constant view of her pretty innocence and an occasional glimpse of her profounder and womanly nature that had touched his heart and wakened in him feelings that he had refrained from confessing to himself.

Then came the moment when she had turned to him for help and he had been the single person in the world who could save John Dorr.

Sharp and brief as had been the struggle in his own mind, it had brought him to an acknowledgment of the fact that she was the only woman be wanted for his wife.

On the very tick of her hour of trouble he had ventured to ask his reward for service.

She had promised, and now be, baro net and retired officer of the British army, shook like a boy at the thought of the happiness that awaited him.

They met at breakfast. Dorr still: showing the effects of his night's adventures. Ruth bright eyed from want of sleep and Sir Donald alone presenting the appearance of one who had begun the day aright after a sound night's rest.

Their natural topic of conversation was of Dorr's attempt to capture the idol and Sir Donald's rescue of him.

John could give little satisfaction to Ruth's minute inquiries, and the Englishman confessed that be himself. though much more familiar with the native ways and native temples, had not much notion of exactly how it had all come about nor how he had found Dorr and extriented him.

"The only thing I gather from it all to this," he said amiably. "You had better take my advice in this country and not try to perform any of your western feats. India is a very old country, and they resent here anything that doesn't follow the good old lines.

"I suppose I was very footish." John confessed ruefully. "But when I saw that image right within reach I simply couldn't resist the temptation to grab it and try to escape."

Sir Donald looked at Ruth meaning-"I can't say that I'm a bit sorry, old chap," he told Dorr. "After all, as you say, it's an ill wind that blows no one any good."

Instantly Ruth caught his meaning. and her eyes fell. Yes, she had promtsed, and this brave gentleman who had risked his life for her sake should not be without his reward.

But-she stared miserably at her plate until John rallied her and swore that he would yet get the plans.

"And here comes the fellow who will tell us what really did happen." Sir



"I suppose I was very foolish," John confessed ruefully.

Donald remarked, pointing to a much bedraggied native who had entered the compound and was evidently waiting for some one.

"That's my old servant," he continued. "If you will excuse me I'll go and hear what he has to tell us."

Ruth and John watched the two of them for some time, the tall, carefully dressed Englishman and the dirty na

They could see that hie latter was much excited and toward the last Sir Donald himself seemed to tose a little of his aniomh.

Finally they saw him nod curtly to coling John Dorr from the the native, who squatted down on the payement. A moment later he had rejoined them. His usually placed face bore an expression of anxiety.

"What can be the matter?" demand-

"Not anything for you to worry about," replied Paversham, "I'm sure I run arrange everything presently And what facts they were that but you certainly stirred up the priests. Dorr.

"Well, what do they intend to do?" Faversham belonged to that great inquired John, undisturbed, except that class of Englishmen who unite the he did not understand a glance ex-

"It seems they have started a kind has made Great Britain the colonizer of holy war against us." the baronet answered grindy. "You desecrated He was as formal in many ways as their idols and they've excited a lot of

"And what?" demanded John impatientiy.



She Impulsively Turnea to John.

ly. "The truth of the matter is, we are known to be stopping here and the undoubtedly visit us shortly. "But the police."

Sir Denaid looked very uncomfortable indeed. "My dear fellow, don't you realize that what you and I did last might was purely and simply indefenstble? We tried to rob a temple, to be frank about it."

"I tried to recover some papers beonging to us," he protested,

"We would have a stiff time trying to prove that to the officials here," was the reply. "As a matter of fact. I can't afford to bring this up. I'm still practically an officer and I should have a dence of a time clearing myself You can't afford to call in the police because you're an American, and you broke British law, and I very much fear killed a British subject of fwo.

"I see," Dorr assented thoughtfully. But what are we to do?

"Precisely, precisely the question," said Sir Donald. "You and I could slip away, but there is the young lady to

"And the plans," said John doggedly. Sir Donald dushed angrily. considering the young lady in this

"And I, as her guardian, have to think of her best Interests," was the

retort Faversham tugged at his mustache in perplexity. Then he said quietly.

"I think Miss Gailon has really put her interests in my charge." "What-what do you mean?" stam-

mered Dorr. At this moment there came from the street outside the sound of cries and yells and trampling feet. The two men looked at each other. With one accord they withdrew inside the ball-

"That's the mob coming!" Sir Donald said hoarsely. "Now for it!"

"We must save Ruth at all events!" "Certainly," said Faversham coldly. But I must plan quickly. Ah, here

comes my faithful Achmet!" The servant spoke rapidly in the vernacular, and Sir Donald answered In the same tongue. Then he turned

"Bring Miss Gallon here quickly," he commanded. "Don't alarm her need

Ruth responded to the summon without a tremor, and when a few victous as he was, was possessed by hurried words had informed her of an nonest and whole souled love for what was afoot she turned to the Eng. Jean lishman and said simply, "What shall !

"I am going to put you in charge of "I trust him, and he will see you safe.

street without and was yelling for lode

vengeance on the sacrilegious white occasional stone against the wall, Achmet bawed low before Ruth and blot. with a gesture indicated that she was

to follow him. She hesitated. Sir Donald curtly said, "Hurry?" She impulsively turned to John, and he saw her eyes filled with anxiety for

him. That serisfied his wounded heart, and he urged her on. Whyn she had disappeared in the

wake of the hastening servant Sir Donald glanced at Dorr and then said abruptly: "Come ahead! We'll try a back way out."

"We shan't interfere with Ruth's getting away, shall we?" John re aponded.

There was a glimmer of admiration in Faversham's eyes as he shook his

Achmet will take her his own way. We go an entirely different one -If we escape the mob."

He had hardly spoken when the out er gate swung inward and there was a wild crush of struggling bodies between the high pillars. A stone struck the floor between the two Europeans.

"Come with me," said Faversham and drew Dorr around a corner and then inside a small entry. Another entry giving off this offered escape and they darted down it. An instant later they were in an empty courtyard.

"I know where I am now," Faversham said coolly and opened a gate to the opposite wall which led into a gar-Five minutes later the two men were strolling along a quiet lane out of sight and sound of the mob.

"They will destroy all our things," Dorr suggested.

"No. The botelkeeper and the police will see to it that they don't. All they wanted was you and me. Failing to catch us, they will disperse." John went on eagerly.

"Achmet will take ber to a camp of beggars outside the city." he an-

"But how? She won't be safe with only a native."

"Safer than with a regiment of soldiers," was the response. "I know ion safe and sound. I know Achmet must take. of old. He is specially trustworthy because he is a Mohammedan and he doesn't respect idois any more than you and I do."

They finally reached the camp up the bank of the river and Achmet satanmed before them. "Where is the maiden?" demanded

The servant rose and took the cover-

"I heard your voices," she said, men frequently dropped what small laughing. "Achmet thought I ought to pretense they offered of peaceableness surprise you.

"And that is the way you got out of the hotel?" demanded John, "Yes, Achmet tucked me into this idol

basket and carried me right through all those terrible people."

manded presently.

"I'll have Achmet get our belong its source in the mountains, said Faversnam. Filts gung here is his, he says. We can't do bet sham and Dorr, but Wilkerson refuster than stick with them for awhile ed to turn saide or delay once on the I believe they are going up into the trail of the idol. And at last they bills anyway. So much the bet'r for came within view of the little cavalus. Bhain is no spot for you and me fust now.

"But the idol and the plans!" protested John. "We know where it is today. Tomorrow it may be a hundred miles away or hidden past our ever finding

"That is true," said Sir Donald, "But the safety of Miss Gallon is paramount. I will do what I can. Possibly I'll be able to do more than you think." With this Dorr had to be content, but

later when he and Ruth were alone he brought the subject up again. To bis amazement. Ruth seemed little interested and her manner was an odd mixture of reserve and timidity.

Gone was the old frankness and in At last John said quietly, "I hope you don't think I was wholly careless

of your safety last night. My only object was to get back your papers. And Ruth, with Sir Donald's flushed face before her eyes and his voice in her ears, remembered her promise and

CHAPTER XXVI.

Wilkerson Again on the Trail.

landed to their arrival in Bhala But the idol itself, the object of their quest, still concealed its whereabouts in spite of the most minute inquiries.

"We'll simply have to watch Dorr," Wilkerson said at last. "We know be is on the trail, and we'll just follow him. Sooner or later we'll catch him."

Jean Darnell sullenly agreed, but privately confided to Drake that she thought Wilkerson had lost his nerve. The climate did not suit ber, nor the food, nor the primitive modes of travel. and her temper grew worse and worse. Drake promised to do some investigating on his own book. He was once

more completely under the woman's domination, and he dreamed of finding the precious papers himself and so puting Wilkerson out of the running. Strangely enough, the man, weakly

She knew this, and at times her tawny eyes rested on him with unmismy old servant Achmet," he told her, takable affection, but she knew perfectly well that she would choose Dorr and I shall have to go a separate Wilkerson provided he made good by gaining the master key and uncover-By this time the mob had filled the ing the wealth of the great mother

It was Drake who brought the news men, punctuating its demands with an of the riot in the temple and the outcome of Dorr's attempt to steal the

"He was disguised and thought be could get away with it." he went on-But the priests were too quick for

Wilkerson's shifty eyes narrowed "I'll get thet idoi!" he boasted.

"I forgot to tell you that the idel isu't there any longer." Drake continued "From what I could learn the temple wasn't considered a safe place for it, and it's disappeared."

"Where to?" demanded Wilkerson. "That I couldn't find out. It was



"The idol isn't there any longer," Drake continued

but a white man who lives with the natives binted that they had taken it up the river into the bills."

With this slight clew both Drake and Wilkerson totled unweariedly until they had established the fact that "But where shall we find Ruth?" the idol had indeed been sent into another part of the country for safe keep-

> Then they prepared to follow, having found out that Dorr and Faversham had vanished and were suppos ed also to have gone billward.

Mrs. Darnell most unwillingly consented to stay behind, but yielded where the place is. Let's go to it. 1 when Drake set before her the diffiguarantee that we shall find Miss Gal. cuitles and perils of the road they Both men promised to be gone only so long as would be needful to recover

the idol, and to both separately she made it plain that she had gone as far as she would in helping them. The two men found a couple of half-

bloods to their liking and by judicious expenditure of money managed to get together a small band to accompany them into the hills. ing off a large basket. Buth smiled up It was impressed upon them that the trip was dangerous and that the bill-

get out right away, but I wanted to and warred on friend and foe nilke. It was through these also that they learned more specifically the route taken by the priests in charge of the

Equipped at last, they started forth and for two days kept pretty closely "What is to be done now?" John de to the river, which wound about through the bills, mounting slowly to

Several times they heard of Payer. cade which was escorting the god to a place of safety.

Vile as were the men be had bired Wilkerson dared not trust them too far. He knew that they were superstitious, and he feared that when it came to a buttle between avarice and inborn terror of the supernatural he would be left in the lurch.

So he warned Drake not to appear too anxious and by no means to let their followers know that they intended to seize the image and take it away with them. "But if the papers are in that idol,"

Drake protested, "we ought to be able to get them and replace the old image. with nobody a jot the worse." "That may be possible," was the response. "On the other hand, the plans

may be concealed so that it will take time to find them." They discussed a dozen plans and unally decided that the next night the two of them, accompanied only by

their guide, should make the trial. "But supposing they have the image, where shall we find it?" questioned T had not been difficult for their packs, and you may be sure they Harry Wilkerson and Mrs. have concealed the idel well. Unless Darnell to trace Faversham they feared its being stolen again they and his party from the time wouldn't be going to all this pains. We'll find it all right," was Wilker-

son's sole response. The evening came when they were to put their scheme to the test. Their own little company made camp and after supper gradually went to sleep. It was 10 o'clock when Wilkerson nodded to Drake, and they quit their

places by the dying fire. Outside of the circle they met the man who was to guide them, and one glance at his brutal face showed Wilkerson that he was once more confronted with a problem.

The man made no bones of demand-

ing a large extra sum in compensa tion for his risks and intimated with extreme plainness that in case his exorbitant blackmail was not paid he would not only not accompany them. but put it out of their power to go

For an hour Wilkerson bargained and haggled, but all to no perpose. At

last he gave in and practically strip him wit a gesture at once childish ped himself or colo, which the other pocketed without a thank you

The three of them started forth under a glimmering moon toward the priests' camp, a mile or so away by a

Half an bour's steady tramping brought them within eyenbot of the place, and Wilkerson went ahead to spy out the lay of things.

When he came back he roughly told Drake, in reply to his question, that the idol must be in one of the pack sacks lying about.

"It's a case of sneak up and get a sack each of us and then look for the idol in it," he said. "All right" Druke growled, "But

it's risky business. In case of a muss where'll we meet again?" "At our own camp," Wilkerson whis-

pered and led the way. When they came close to the spot where the natives were asleep the three of them paused and listened. Presently Wilkerson gave a silent

signal that no one was awake, and they crept up among the baggage. The first two sacks yielded nothing and Wilkerson was reaching out for one that seemed bulkier than the rest

when their guide coughed and instant-

ty a couple of the priests wakened. Seelog strangers, they gave an alarm, and one, anglarently a soldier, fired off an ancient musket so close to Drake that he incontinently dropped his burden and fied.

He heard Wilkerson cursing behind him, a couple of more shots and then took to his heels in good earnest as be heard rapid footsteps. A moment later Wilkerson had

caught up to him, panting and dragging the sack, which he had refused

to surrender. Between them they carried it on further and then rested in a slight hollow till their guide came up.

"If the idol isn't in this sack," Wilkerson said with a snart, "I'll go back and shoot up the whole outfit and

When the thongs were cut and the great bag opened the first object that met their eyes was the image they sought, glimmering in the half light. The moment be saw it and knew that his quest was ended Wilkerson

boldly got to his feet. "Now for our own camp. We'll just see where those plans are," he growled. Drake and the guide both protested

flung the rest of the stuff away and

Safely away from pursuit, they lit a fight and examined their find. "It's the same one." Wilkerson said triumphantly.

in vain.

"Made of metal, too," said Drake slowly. "Now, where are the plans?" "Inside of it!" announced his companion, beating on the idol with his knuckles. "Now to find out the open-

It did not take long for him to discover the movable eye, and when be had pulled that out he thrust his finger in and withdrew it with a folded "Safe and sound." he exulted, drop-



The First Object That Met Their Eyes Was the Image They Sought.

it lay staring grotesquely at the stars through its single eye. Drake and Wilkerson carefully examined their find, and Wilkerson laugh-

ed almost hysterically.

"The gold isn't a thousand feet from the main tunnel of the 'Master Key' minel" he said triumphantly and thrust the plans into his bosom before Drake could see more.

"If those plans are lost or anything

happens to you." Drake said, with an ugly note in his voice, "all our trouble goes for nothing. I am entitled to a copy of those plans." Wilkerson laughed in his face, and

the expression on his saturnine visage made even the brutal guide cringe backward "Give you a copy!" he snarled. When I've hunted for them all these years and suffered the agonies of hell on account of them? They're mine!

tell you!" This last he almost shouted into the still air, and Drake drew back The man was mad.

All that gold is mine! Mine! Mine, I

"At least let them have their idol," he muttered, picking it up. Wilkerson snatched it away from

and murderous. "I think I'll keep this for a memento," he cried, careless of who-

might bear him. He stood up, the image in his grasp, and before the sound of his binsphemy



Drake and the guide crept away in silent horror.

And not far distant Faversham sat vigilant by the side of his camp watching over the sleep of Ruth Gallon. Possibly it was an echo of Wilker-

son's savage cry of triumph that stir-

red her in her dreams. She sighed and reached out one slender hand. It touched that of John Dorr and rested there as if she had found safety.

Sir Donald saw that movement, and his eyes burned with jealousy. But he did not move, keeping his ears open for the slightest sound, his eyes for the faintest shadow between his charges and the horizon.

Animal Actors

The impression is created by an occasional moving picture of wild animal life that the beasts, in order to force them into poses for the camera, are cruelly treated. Nothing, however, it is said, is further from the truth. Careful investigation has shown that force is seldom employed, and wherever it has been used the film resulting has been unsatisfactory. Mr. Ernest A. Dench, a London naturalist, who has made an extensive investigation of this phase of the movie industry, declares that the dumb actors are given every consideration. The thrills experienced by thespectators are the result, in a majorityof instances, of the very innocent expedient of placing a piece of ment at a strategic point. The animal leaps for it. and the cinematograph records every motion of the lesp. The spectator, of course, sees nothing of the meat and concludes that cruelty alone could produce the picture thrown on the screen. "The animals." he concludes, "really have a much easier time than those that appear in trick acts on the stage." -Detroit Free Press.

Round About Dorking. The neighborhood of Dorking, where George Meredith lived, has many literary associations independent of its connection with that famous povelist. It was at Burford Bridge, near Dorking, that Keats completed "Endymion" in November, 1817; close by, at the Rookery, was born Father Maithus, the popular economist, and at West Humble Frances Burney, after her marriage with General d'Arblay, built Camilla cottage, with prefits of her novel of that name and settled down. Sheridan resided at Polesden und John Stuart Mill at Mickleham. while other illustribus residents in the locality in earlier times were John Evelyn and Daniel Defoe. To most people, however, the chief literary association of Dorking is with Dickfor was it not at the Marquis of Ganaby's, variously identified with the

Fewest Battles In Docember. December is the least belligerent

Westminster Coulte.

White Hart and the Old King's Head,

that Mr. Weller, Sr., made the fatai

blunder of proposing to a "vidder?"-

month in the calendar. A correspondcut who has analyzed the dates of over 1,000 battles of the world, from Marathon to Mons. finds that fewer than fifty of them were fought in December, and these few were among the least important and decisive. Scarcely one of them would be known to the proverbial schoolboy. On the other hand, July, as is only fitting, seeing that it is named after a soldier, is the most belligerent, with 132 great battles to its credit or otherwise, and is closely followed by August with 122.-Westminster Gazette.

(To be Continued.)

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